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ABSTRACT

The mission of the Department of Education's Professional Development Team was to examine the best available research and exemplary practices related to professional development, and to summarize the lessons learned from this knowledge base in the form of principles that might inform practitioners and policymakers across the country and guide the department's efforts in the area of professional development. As developed by the team, the mission of professional development is to prepare and support educators to help all students achieve to high standards of learning and development. The principles ensure that professional development: focuses on teachers as central to student learning and on individual, collegial, and organizational improvement; respects and nurtures the intellectual and leadership capacity of teachers, principals, and others in the school community and reflects best available research and practice in teaching, learning, and leadership; and enables teachers to develop further expertise in subject content, teaching strategies, uses of technologies, and other essential elements in teaching to high standards. (ND)

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Teachers and other educators play critical roles in education reform strategies intended to ensure that all students have equal opportunities to achieve to high standards of learning and development. With this in mind, Secretary Richard W. Riley established the U.S. Department of Education's Professional Development Team. The Team's mission was to examine the best available research and exemplary practices related to professional development, and to summarize the lessons learned from this knowledge base in the form of principles that might inform practitioners and policymakers across the country and guide the Department's efforts in the area of professional development.

The mission statement and principles of professional development were published in draft form in the *Federal Register* in December, 1994, and disseminated to more than 600 people and organizations with interests in education. After careful consideration of the extensive comments the Department received, the principles were revised and finalized.

The product of our efforts is the mission statement and principles that follow. We share them with you in the firm belief that high-quality professional development reflecting these principles, which are grounded in the practical wisdom of leading educators across the country, will have a positive and lasting effect on teaching and learning.

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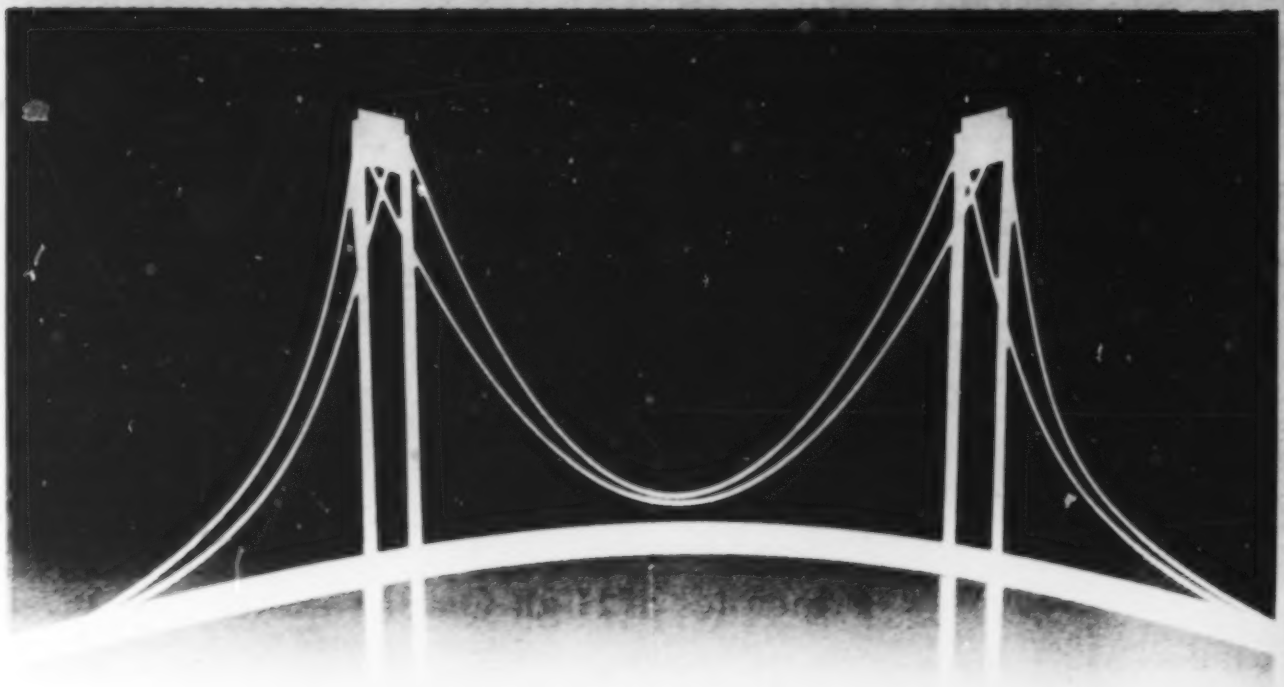

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Building Bridges:

The Mission & Principles of Professional Development

U.S. Department of Education

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Professional development plays an essential role in successful education reform. Professional development serves as the bridge between where prospective and experienced educators are now and where they will need to be to meet the new challenges of guiding **all** students in achieving to higher standards of learning and development.

High-quality professional development as envisioned here refers to rigorous and relevant content, strategies, and organizational supports that ensure the preparation and career-long development of teachers and others whose competence, expectations and actions influence the teaching and learning environment. Both pre- and in-service professional development require partnerships among schools, higher education institutions and other appropriate entities to promote inclusive learning communities of everyone who impacts students and their learning. Those within and outside schools need to work together to bring to bear the ideas, commitment and other resources that will be necessary to address important and complex educational issues in a variety of settings and for a diverse student body.

Equitable access for all educators to such professional development opportunities is imperative. Moreover, professional development works best when it is part of a systemwide effort to improve and integrate the recruitment, selection, preparation, initial licensing, induction, ongoing development and support, and advanced certification of educators.

High-quality professional development should incorporate **all** of the principles stated below. Adequately addressing each of these principles is necessary for a full realization of the potential of individuals, school communities and institutions to improve and excel.

Principles of High-Quality Professional Development

The mission of professional development is to prepare and support educators to help all students achieve to high standards of learning and development.

Professional Development:

- ... focuses on teachers as central to student learning, yet includes all other members of the school community;
- ... focuses on individual, collegial, and organizational improvement;
- ... respects and nurtures the intellectual and leadership capacity of teachers, principals, and others in the school community;
- ... reflects best available research and practice in teaching, learning, and leadership;
- ... enables teachers to develop further expertise in subject content, teaching strategies, uses of technologies, and other essential elements in teaching to high standards;
- ... promotes continuous inquiry and improvement embedded in the daily life of schools;
- ... is planned collaboratively by those who will participate in and facilitate that development;
- ... requires substantial time and other resources;
- ... is driven by a coherent long-term plan;
- ... is evaluated ultimately on the basis of its impact on teacher effectiveness and student learning; and this assessment guides subsequent professional development efforts.